Bicycle and Pedestrian Collisions in the District of Columbia: 1997-1999

District Department of Transportation
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Introduction and Executive Summary

On average, there are 260 collisions involving bicycles every year in the District of Columbia and about 609 involving pedestrians. The District government is committed to bringing these numbers down, while simultaneously increasing the amount of bicycling and walking in Washington. The first step in reducing collisions is determining where, when and why they are occurring.

Most of the information about bicycle and pedestrian crashes in this report is drawn from the District of Columbia's Traffic Accident Reporting and Analysis System (TARAS) data files. TARAS was developed in 1994 to help the DC Department of Public Works and various other agencies analyze traffic accidents in the District. The TARAS application is designed to accept certain information from the Police Department's PD-10 accident reporting form, and to manipulate the data for analytical and reporting purposes.[1] Accident reports are collected and input on an annual basis. Currently, the system contains reports from 1997 to 1999. The statistics in this report are based on these three years.

In addition, some National Park Service data was available for the study period. Where possible, this information has been added to TARAS data to provide a more complete picture of bicycle and pedestrian crashes in the District. This data has been footnoted where added.

Below is a summary of some of the primary findings of this analysis:

- Over the course of the three years studied, there were two cyclist fatalities, which occurred in 1999. There were 48 pedestrian fatalities resulting from collisions during the same time period, including one on National Park Service lands.

- In the three-year time period, there were 38,192 reported traffic collisions. Of those, about 2%, or 774, involved cyclists, and almost 5%, or 1,785, involved pedestrians. NPS data shows approximately 35 bicycle collisions and 43 pedestrian collisions during the study period.

- From 1997 to 1999 there were an average of 270 collisions per year involving bicycles and 609 involving pedestrians.

- For both cyclist and pedestrian collisions, the worst time of day is the evening rush hour—most collisions occurred during the 3:30-7:30pm time frame. This is likely due to the fact that most trips take place during the evening rush hour. The next most dangerous time of the day for both cyclists and pedestrians was the middle of the day—from 10:00am to 3:30pm.

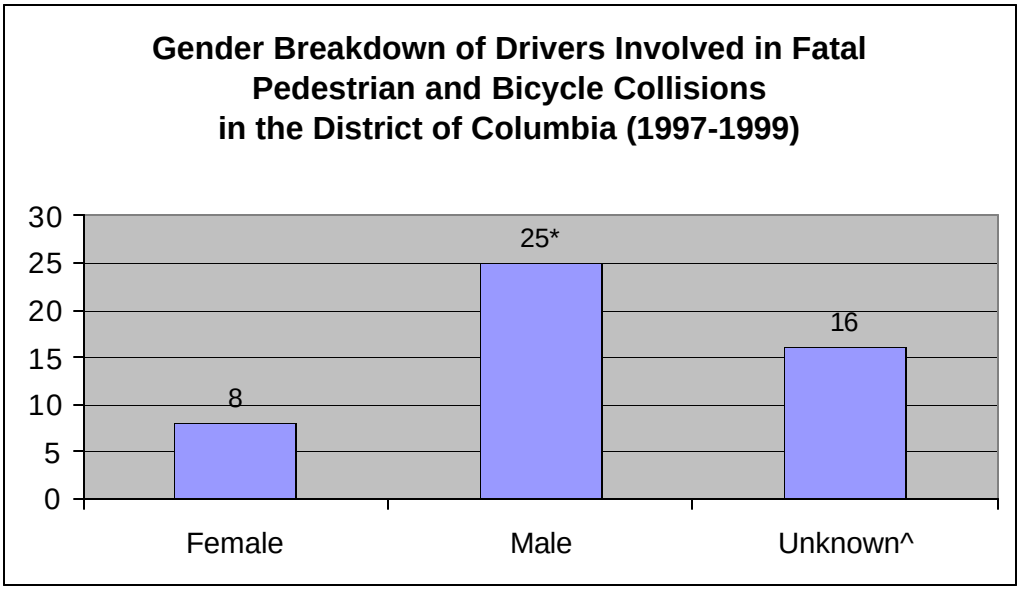
[1] TARAS User's Manual, December 2000.

- In the pedestrian incidents, "Pedestrian violation" was cited as the primary contributing circumstance. For bicycle incidents, the primary contributing circumstance is shown as "Other." This is a reporting flaw the District plans to correct.

- Cyclists in the 26-35 year old age group were most likely to be in a collision, while pedestrians age 15 and younger were most likely to be involved in a collision.

- The worst intersections for bicycle collisions are both in Ward 2 at: **13th & I Sts.** and **Connecticut Ave. & L St., NW**—logging 7 collisions each over the 3-year time period. The worst intersection for pedestrian collisions is **Benning Rd. & Minnesota Ave., NE**, in Ward 7, which logged 9 collisions over the 3-year time period. Interestingly, only one intersection, Wisconsin Ave. and M St., NW, was one of the worst for both pedestrians and cyclists. There were 8 pedestrian collisions and 4 cyclist collisions over the 3-year period.

- Most automobile drivers involved in accidents were male, and the median age for *all* drivers involved in collisions with cyclists was 36, in collisions with pedestrians—38. Most drivers involved in fatal accidents with pedestrians or cyclists were male. See the following chart.



The last report of this kind was done in 1979. A number of the same dangers and unsafe practices that were occurring in 1979 still contribute to bike and pedestrian collisions today. In 1979, most collisions were occurring during daylight hours in dense residential and commercial areas. The same was true for the 1997-1999

period. In 1979, cyclists and pedestrians were as likely to be at fault for a collision as the automobile driver was. The same is still true. In 1979, older children and young adults were most likely involved in bike collisions and the same is true for this study period.

A couple things have changed, however. For example, in 1979, children and the elderly were most likely to be involved in pedestrian collisions. In the 1997-1999 time period, children and adults age 36-45 were most likely involved in pedestrian collisions. Also, in 1979, most collisions were occurring during non-rush hour, while in this study period, most collisions occurred during the evening rush hour.

This is a critical time for the District—and for the entire region—with respect to transportation. As transportation plans address major issues like traffic and air pollution, and residents consider alternatives to the automobile, the safety of those who choose bicycling and walking is paramount.